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E.O. 12958: DECL: 4/13/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: TOP MOQTADA LIEUTENANT RIYAD AL-NURI ASSASSINATED IN NAJAF;
CURFEW IMPOSED

CLASSIFIED BY: Angus Simmons, Team Leader, PRT Najaf, DOS.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (U) This is a PRT Najaf reporting cable.

12. (C) On April 10, Najaf Governor Asad called PRT to inform us that unknown gunmen had assassinated Riyadh al-Nuri, a relative of Moqtada al-Sadr's by marriage and senior operations aide in Najaf. Asad called Team Leader (TL) promptly after he imposed a curfew in Najaf. Gunmen in an unmarked vehicle reportedly fatally shot Al Nuri as he made his way to his residence following Friday prayers at the OMS stronghold Kufa Mosque. Exact circumstances have been subject to conflicting reports.

13. (C) Riyadh, in his mid-forties, was a top Lieutenant of Motada al-Sadr's and enjoyed strong support and respect from both the Sadr current and the JAM wings. He was a close follower of Moqtada's father Mohammed Sadiq al-Sadr, and Moqtada's brother-in-law. We understand he was the key leader of Moqtada's movement in Baghdad in 2004. He is also said to be on the moderate wing of the Sadr movement and involved in the recent political discussions between the Najaf authorities and the Sadrists. He had survived two previous assassination attempts.

14. (C) Governor Asad, in a subsequent call, informed TL he had just adjourned a security meeting with Provincial Council, ISF, ODA and MiTT Team representatives based in Najaf. Asad noted that Moqtada al Sadr would be in Najaf for the next three days for al-Nuri's "Fataha" (funeral) observances, which is Islamic custom. Asad noted that the Najaf police had been instructed to carry out a thorough investigation. ISF forces were put on high alert and vehicle traffic in and out of Najaf s prohibited.

15. (C) By mid-day on April 11, the Najaf authorities felt sufficiently confident about the security situation that they began permitting traffic in and out of the province, and people felt comfortable walking in the streets of Najaf. TL spoke to Governor Asad early that evening. The Governor noted that he had just finished convening his security team, along with ODA and MiTT team representatives, and the Governor informed him that the night curfew had been lifted as well and that the situation in Najaf was normal. While he had previously asked PRT to avoid movements in Najaf city during the three-day Fataha period, Asad noted that he thought things were fine for movement. FYI, we nonetheless have no plans to visit Najaf until after Tuesday.

16. (C) COMMENT: The GOI appears to have handled the situation in a sensitive and conciliatory manner. President Talabani sent Moqtada a letter of condolence, and Prime Minister Maliki has announced that a special commission would be sent to Najaf to investigate the assassination. Najaf security forces and the

provincial government appear to have managed the situation in Najaf well. Asad's calls to the PRT sends a strong signal about the governor's personal desire to keep the PRT informed in real time. High emotions resulting from the assassination -- and presence of Moqtada al-Sadr -- have provided the Najaf government and security team one of its tougher challenges, but they appear to have handled it well. The Governor is sufficiently comfortable with the situation that he plans to continue, albeit after a delay of a day, on his planned visit to Cairo.

SIMMONS